

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY:

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Denise Smith

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Senator Crisco, Representative Fontana and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 301, mandating insurance coverage for people with autism spectrum disorders.

Connor, my five year old son, was diagnosed with Autism at age 3. We were given names of various professionals to take Connor to in order to help facilitate the best recommendations for the school system. We made an appointment with a well-known pediatric psychologist and borrowed the \$1,800 required for the visit. The great news is that we took his advice and applied it to our son's life. It did not happen exactly the way the doctor intended it to happen, for reasons I will not get into here, but the bottom line is that our son is imposed upon for at least 30 hours a week by the School system and by outside therapies provided by Talcott Center for Child Development. These services include OT, PT, Speech and a Social Skills group. We also take him out every weekend and impose on him some more. It took him over a year and a half to be able to "consistently" transition into school and many other places without tantruming but in following his recommendations he did it and so much more. "Currently" Connor is a success story, it all stems back to that initial diagnosis, and recommendations made and followed through on when he was 3 years old. He is doing terrific! Parents of his typical peers cannot believe the transformation.

We have been told several times that we would be greatly served to have Connor reevaluated every year so that new recommendations can be made that take into consideration his successes and adjusted for other issues that have arisen or may arise in the "wonderful" world of autism. We have not been able to afford that "luxury" for the past 2 years. We recently questioned some things that we noticed at home and that therapists noticed during their sessions with him and were told that our son is potentially having issues with processing, encoding and retrieving information. He has come so far and it would be very helpful to have recommendations from a pediatric psychologist to deal with these issues as he is preparing to enter Kindergarten next fall. Kindergarten brings on academic expectations that he has not had to deal with to date and where problems with processing, encoding and retrieval would have a negative impact on his ability to

learn. An evaluation would provide an accurate diagnosis of the problem and then a plan of attack to conquer it. The various approaches are also scientifically proven to work. We can testify that they worked at the first stage of Connor's life and we would appreciate the opportunity to allow them to work at the next stage of his life. We are struggling to find the \$2,000, which is currently needed for this reevaluation. With the passing of this bill, we will no longer have to worry about this issue and will be able to focus on putting into place the recommendations necessary for Connor to have the continuing success we now know is possible and that every child deserves.

Thank you for your time.

Denise Smith  
Simsbury, CT  
Mom to a 5 year old with Autism